

ラブライブ!

School idol diary



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Love Live! School Idol Diary: Eli Ayase

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01 - Our Reasons

This is so dumb.

I realize my mouth is about to move, and quickly stop myself, leaving my mouth chewing air for a little bit.

I'm in the student council room, after school.

It's spring, and there's still noise coming from throughout the school.

Maybe it's because the new school term's only just started, unlike normal, there's a lot of students busily going about the halls.

About 20% more of them than usual.

And their movements are accelerated too.

As I stop, one of the second-years who's helping me prepare some print-outs for distribution turns to look at me, wondering what's wrong.

Through the slightly-above-half-open window, a vaguely dusty spring breeze carrying the aroma of pink flowers drifts in.

I suddenly snap out of it.

No, nothing's wrong. I smile to reassure her, then retreat back into my own thoughts.

This time, I keep all of it within my own chest, so that nobody can hear me.

The student council president smile stuck to my cheeks remains right where it is.

Oh, come on! Why are you off having a pleasant chat when we're so busy over here!? We've still got lots more work to do!

Frickin' Nozomi.

I try my best to keep my line of sight away from her, so she doesn't notice how annoyed I am. In the corner of my eyes, I catch Nozomi smiling an exaggerated smile, her body and hands moving about as she's having what seems to be a very enjoyable conversation.

Hmph.

Nozomi's totally checking out that cute 2nd-year girl out, just because they had a request for her.

She looks ridiculous like that!

She's playing up her pseudo-Kansai dialect more than usual, and... oh, that girl she's talking to seems to be very confused by what she's saying.

"Hey, Nozomi! I'm all done over here. Now I just need to take these to the staff room. What about you?" I suddenly call out.

Rather than being ashamed, Nozomi just looks back, dumbfounded.

Instead, the second-year with her stammers, "Oh, s-sorry for wasting your time! The conversation was so interesting, I stayed longer than I expected. I'll be going now!"





Even the panicked way she waves her hand is cute. Lately, that girl's been gaining recognition as one of the top cuties in the second-year class. Kotori Minami.

"Oh, sorry, I didn't mean it like that! I just heard Nozomi going on about another one of her weird ideas, like becoming an idol or name fortunes, and other nonsense, so I wanted to give you a way out." I say, winking at Kotori, who smiles a little bit.

Sheesh, Nozomi's making me sound like a jerk here! Hanging around Nozomi causes nothing but trouble for me.

"Come on, Nozomi. I know Kotori's cute, but that's no reason for you to kill time by asking her to become an idol, okay? I'm not sure if you're just weird, or what. Now, quit slacking off. We've got lots of work

to do here-" I say.

Kotori suddenly responds, "Ah, no! I was the one who asked her about being an idol..." Her face turns a little bit red.

Huh?

What was that?

Nozomi looks down on me, knowing she's won.

"That's right. I was offering to think of a good name for their group, one that'd bring them lots of luck♪"

"Thanks, but, really, it's fine," Kotori says. "We're doing this for everyone at Otonoki. We becoming school idols to keep Otonokizaka Academy alive, so that's why we should let everyone submit names. That's what Honoka and me decided together♥"

Keeping Otonokizaka Academy alive...

With school idols??

It's spring, and the flowers are in bloom.

Only a few days have passed since the opening ceremony that started the 3-year countdown until our school closes.

The first time I heard about it, it was a small, insubstantial piece of news, like one of the pink petals floating in the dry spring breeze.

Small, unreliable, and fleeting.

It was hard to believe it was reality.

Like if I reached out and grasped it in my hand, I could crush it and make it go away.

But...

Just like one of those enchanting, tiny little flowers, that news gently clung to some part of my heart, scratching out a mysterious tone as it moved that corner of my heart.

♥♥♥♥♥♥♥♥

"What the heck are school idols, anyway?" I asked Nozomi, not bothering to turn my head and look at her as I carried heavy paper bags in both hands and hurried to make up for lost time,

The streets near Akihabara station are, as usual, packed.

Around me, there's tourists on shopping trips, obsessive university students, as well as ordinary salarymen in their suits, students in uniform, and of course, greeters for electronics stores and cafes. Well, in short, it's the usual crowd for Akihabara on a weekday evening.

Nozomi, somehow managing to keep up with me despite moving at a seemingly sluggish pace, stops for a moment. She makes another exaggerated expression of surprise.

"Huh!? You don't even know what school idols are? Well, I should have known you'd be like that, Elichka. Well, it might not be easy to explain, but it's a bit different from that amateur modeling stuff you like to brag about getting scouted for. These school idols are who the trendy girls wanna be♥ All girls love that shiny, fluffy stuff♪ And, through the power of club activities, anyone can become a resident of the idol world, filled with stars and hearts and ribbons!



That's the sort of thing we're-" Nozomi dances as she talks.

Gross. I reflexively stick my tongue out at her.

"I know that already! Even I know that school idols are the latest craze. I mean, I am the sitting student council president, right? I'm the one who approves all the club activity plans, and since I have the joint meetings with the other schools, I keep up with what clubs other schools have too..." I say as I look inside the bags I'm holding. They contain informational fliers about Otonokizaka Academy, made by the student council to be distributed at the nearby middle school.



They talk about the future of Otonokizaka academy.

About the recently-announced plans to shut it down.

I sigh a little bit just thinking about it. At the same time, Nozomi says, "Oh, you knew?" She halted her dance halfway through, stopping in a weird pose. She's gotta be doing this on purpose.

"I do know. And that's why I know that we definitely don't have a school idol club at our school. So-"

So what's going on?

My throat locks up for a moment.

Kotori's going to start a school idol club?

And that's not all.

It's a school idol club to keep Otonokizaka Academy alive.

When they've already decided to shut it down in 3 years?

I can't just ignore that.

With that in mind, I focus my gaze even harder on Nozomi.

“What’s going on? You’re not just leading them on while making promises you’re not gonna keep, are you?” A chill runs down my spine as I ask that. Man, what if she really were doing that? The student council doesn’t have the manpower to deal with new club activities right now!

I want to make Otonokizaka Academy exciting. To give it the classiest, most stylish ending. That’s why I ran for student council president.

♥♥♥♥♥♥

I think back.

Back to that day.

In fall, when Nozomi and I were still in our second year. No, it was actually the beginning of winter, when the cold winds were starting to come in.

I was walking home, spacing out and thinking it was about time to start wearing a coat. I was depressed, having given in to the teachers’ pleas at last.

Ugh, why did I run for student council president?

Up until that point, I’d gone straight home after class ended, and never actively participated in any school activities. With my obvious mixed-blood appearance, if anything, I’d had a rather uninspiring and lazy high school life, filled with leisure.

Not me, not me, not me. Those words I’d repeated a million times were swirling in my head.

But, again and again, the teachers had called me in, and there was also the fact that nobody was running for student council president. Well, who can blame them? From the looks of things, the closing of this public school was on the horizon, and we had college entrance exams to worry about. Nobody in their right mind would want to bother with being the student council president. And, it’s not like we’re middle schoolers. In private schools, don’t they usually have a second year be the student council president? Even if we’re a public school, it’s just odd to make a third year do it.

Even if that were all true, that’s an issue on the school staff’s end. It’s not my problem. And why should I have to do it just because nobody else wants to? All those thoughts kept ricocheting within my head.

But, deep in my heart, the words my homeroom teacher said were pressing firmly down on something inside me.

“We don’t have anyone else. There won’t be any other third years with the grades to qualify who’ve been born and raised *in the area*.”

When I heard that, my heart jumped.

Not the part about the grades.

A third year who’s been born and raised *in the area*...

Huh? Does that describe me?

Is there really nobody else? Really??

Some of the classmates I know popped up in my mind.

But, I still thought that might have been true.

Even if the declining birth rate meant there were only six classes total, this was still a nationally funded high school, so the girls from Okachimachi, or Monnaka, or so on, the ones who lived a station or two away, were in the majority.

Of course, there were also some girls who walked or biked to school, but when I thought about it, I'd lived here longer than any of them.

Otonokizaka Elementary, then Otonokzaka Middle School, and now, Otonokizaka Academy.

The full public school course, quite rarely seen in the city.

And from a blonde quarter-Russian.

Heh. I laughed in spite of myself.

The teacher pressed me, "Since you've lived here since your great-grandmother's generation, you know this place really well, so I think you'd be ideal. How about it? You can consider it a way of thanking the town that's raised you. I'm sure your mother and grandmother would be happy about it too, right?"

My chest started tingling.

I was so surprised at how much those words affected me.

"Huh? But, while my grades are decent, they're not exactly honor-student level, and besides, this really isn't my thing..." Even as I said that, in my heart, I felt that I'd already given in.

"We really don't have any other option. You're our last hope, Miss Ayase. If you don't accept, then we just won't have a student council president next year.

With the teacher repeatedly trying to convince me, I started to hate myself for hesitating for so long.

And then, I finally said it. "Fine, if you really want me to do it, then I'll work something out!"

I saw the teacher's face light up, and at the same time, I felt my shoulders slump, as if a heavy weight had been placed upon my back.

I felt melancholy.

Gah, seriously!

This has always been my greatest weakness.

These games of chicken.

When I became the class rep, when I became the conductor of the drum and fife band, and when I became the presenter for the school culture festival... I didn't want to be left holding the hot potato, but I hated all that time I spent staring at the floor and saying nothing, hoping that I wouldn't be chosen.

Every time, I ended up self-destructing because I couldn't handle the wait.

This time, I thought I'd really just take it easy.

When I started I school, I told myself I was done with this hypocrisy and self-sacrifice.

But, in the end, I really blew it.

"Gaaah, give me a break!" I scream as I walk away from the staff room.

Nozomi, who had silently been walking by my side, says, "If you hate it that much, then how about I join you? Well, as long as it'll make things easier on you, Elichi♥"

That made me so happy, I cried.

Afterwards, we got totally fired up for no real reason. I still have the campaign poster we made together back then.

Since I was running, Nozomi proposed a “lucky design to boost my popularity.”

When we took the “lucky design” to school to make copies of it, the teacher laughed, “There’s no other candidates, so you’re elected my default. We don’t need an election.”

That’s true enough. If this job were popular enough that people wanted to fight over it, then they wouldn’t have had to try so hard to persuade me.

We laughed at our own stupidity as we went home.

Now that my school life had suddenly become so much more colorful, I started thinking it might not be so bad, so I made a decision.

Now that I’d chosen to do it, I would make this student council a success for sure.

And to succeed as a student council basically means... to give Otonokizaka Academy a beautiful ending as it shuts down.

For the sake of all the people who loved our town and our school, I would begin preparations for a finale we wouldn’t regret.

For this three-year plan to close the school, Elichka’s gonna do a perfect job with the first step! That’s right. First, our main duty as the student council is to get everyone excited with the countdown to the school’s closure. With all of the clubs shutting down together with the school, we have to make sure nobody loses motivation up until the very end. Then, we have to do the typical time capsules, and events under the trees, as well as some original events. We’ve got mountains of work ahead of us.

With my goal set, I was really going to start working this spring, but...



♥♥♥♥♥♥♥

“Hellooooo♪ Elich, do you hear me? If your brain’s left your body and gone off to some paradise wonderland, then take me with you, too♥”

I hear a mischievous voice.

A momentary daydream.

Those thoughts, vanishing like fog in the sunlight, linger faintly within my chest.

“Gah, Nozomi, if you’re around, you cause so much trouble to me that my paradise wouldn’t be a paradise anymore!” I jest back at her, and then I remember.

“Wait, sorry, they’ve just announced the school’s closing in three years, so why would anyone become a school idol now? The student council’s already having a hard enough time keeping the current clubs active, so how are we supposed to approve the creation of a new club!? You were acting pretty knowledgeable when you were talking to Kotori back then, but you’re not planning on joining them, were you? If you were, then I...”

Nozomi interrupts me with her smile. “Oh, that’s exactly what I’m planning♥”

“You always understand what I’m thinking, Elichi♪” Nozomi says, putting a hand to her face. I can only watch, dumbstruck.
I have no words.
Ugh, she’s just absolutely incomprehensible!

Comments♥Kotori

Back then, Eli was so devoted to her work as the student council president, and on top of it all, she was so smart and beautiful that she was the sort of amazing person I wish I could be like, but she was also a bit distant and unapproachable. I think it’s just so wonderful that we can be in μ’s together now♪ Even if she says harsh things, we can always count on Eli in the end. In a game of chicken, you win by being the loser♥



02 - Our Reasons (Cont.)

“Those girls are so cute, aren’t they?♥” Those startling words came so easily out of Nozomi’s mouth. “Oh, I don’t mean that in a weird way. It’s just that they’re trying so hard to be cute and lovable, and well, you know,” Nozomi nervously explains, or rather, makes excuses for herself.

So, apparently this is what that’s all about.

♥♥♥♥♥♥♥♥

The new school term had started in April, and everyone was preparing for it in their own way. And, that was the day that the second-year student Honoka Kousaka learned the truth, apparently.

Our school, Otonokizaka Academy, was shutting down.

... Sigh.

What a carefree girl.

Not that I’ve ever known her to be any different, though.

Still, the rumors had been floating around ever since the declining birth-rate caused a drop in enrollment 10 years ago (and when we started school, people were already wondering how many more years it would last!), and everyone knew the clock was ticking down. Every year, people would talk about how this year was going to be the last one.

Out of all the local girls (her family runs a pretty well-known confectionery around here), Honoka’s probably the only one who didn’t know. However, we went to the same elementary school, where Honoka was a year below me, so I knew her pretty well.

She’s so innocent. Hm, maybe it’s more than that. She’s just kind of a lucky girl?

I couldn’t stop worrying about what was going to happen to Otonoki, even before I started going to school here. They wouldn’t shut it down before everyone’s graduated, right? What are they going to do with the school after it gets shut down? Are they going to knock it down and build a high-rise? I hope it’ll be a big shopping mall or something, at least. So on, and so forth.

I’d been thinking so much about the future.

But, when Honoka first heard the “shocking” truth that Otonoki was shutting down in 3 years, she nearly fainted. And then, the next moment, she decided to become a school idol (even

though Otonoki’s never even had the slightest hint of any school idol activity before!) and get people excited for our school.

... Absolutely incomprehensible.

Oh, maybe that’s one thing she has in common with Nozomi, huh?

Hm, actually, it was Kotori who had been chatting with Nozomi earlier, wasn’t it?

Whatever.

I know what school idols are, too.

It’s a type of club that’s been the latest craze.





In short, it's regular girls who wish they could be idols playing pretend, right?

I think the dance clubs, cheerleading clubs, and baton-twirling clubs that schools normally have are already more than enough.

Regardless, that's just the trend these days.

Apparently it was pioneered by the semi-pro idol group run by the performing arts department of the newly-established UTX Academy not far from here, but I have no interest in that, so I never bothered to learn any more about them.

Besides, Otonoki Academy doesn't even have a dance club or a cheer club, much less a school idol club.

So, why would she suddenly hit upon the idea of school idols?

"If we can become the school idols of everybody's dreams, then our school's gonna become famous, and more kids will want to come here!"

That's her reason, apparently.

Agh.

There's so much to pick at here that I can't bring myself to say anything.

It's already hard enough to become the "school idols of everybody's dreams", and if they're "idols", then they need to sing and dance, and becoming famous idols isn't going to be anywhere near that easy, and even if they do become popular, that doesn't necessarily mean the school's going to become popular as well, and even that doesn't guarantee that more people will enroll...

It's all quite inconceivable.

I mean, we're already scheduled to close in 3 years.

Who exactly is going to want to enroll in a school like ours?

I think about the words written on the pamphlets in the paper bag I'm holding.

The student council president's message, which I wrote myself.

We might not have much more time to spend with Otonokizaka Academy, but we must show our utmost gratitude for the grand finale...

... as we accompany our school, and its long traditions and history, into its final hours...

And yet she's going to stop our school from shutting down?

By becoming a school idol!?

Nudging my exhausted heart as best as I can, all I can say is, I think it's a bit too late for that.

If you'd started last year, no, maybe the year before, you might have had a little bit of hope.

I think of the faces of those three members that Nozomi had told me about.

Honoka Kousaka, Kotori Minami, and Umi Sonoda.

Even among the second years, they're some of the most cheerful, energetic, and cute.

I can admit they're the kind of girls I'd want to cheer for, but still...

I notice that I'd closed my mouth at some point, and Nozomi's now grinning at me.

"So, why are you getting involved with them, anyway? You're not so blindly optimistic as to think you could become an idol yourself, are you?" I say, trying to act as cold as possible.

"Ack, you didn't have to tell me what I already knew♥ I was just thinking that even if I were the unlucky fourth member, I could counter that with my lucky powers!"

“Yeah, right! Besides, we’re third-years already. We don’t have time to be thinking about any school idols, and you already said you were going to join the student council with me when I agreed to become president, right!? Honestly-”

I wanted to chew Nozomi out for trying to ditch me, but what I end up saying surprises even myself.

I leave my mouth flapping.

Crap, now it totally sounds like I’m jealous because they’re taking Nozomi away from me!

I can feel my face turning red.

Then, Nozomi says, “Ah! Sorry, sorry! I didn’t mean it like that. Helping you with your student council work is my number one priority, but, as you said, it might help with getting recommended for colleges♥ So, to tell the truth, all that happened was Kotori and Honoka asked me how to go about the club application process. I’m smarter than I look, you know. I did get into the student council, after all♪”

“Only because you were tagging along with me.”

“That’s true enough♥ Well, actually, when I went up to the roof to skip my afternoon classes the other day, I found those girls practicing there. They were just so cute, I couldn’t leave them alone...” Nozomi mumbles.

Hehe. Aw man, she really thinks I’m blushing because I’m angry at her for real.

Well, I guess I can let her off this time!

That’s her fault for cutting class and going up to the roof.

Hey, wait a minute.

“So, those girls really are trying to set up a school idol club?”

“Seems like it. I told them I didn’t think it’d be all that easy, though. With a three-year time limit on the school, it’ll be hard to start a club at this point. Being in the student council, even I can tell the teachers have more important things to do, and we don’t even know if they can get any students to come to their activities.”

“They might be able to catch some airheads like you with promises of becoming an idol, though.”

“Maybe so♥ Now, the girl who came up with the idea, Honoka, was it? I hear her family runs a *manjuu* shop, so if I befriend her, I might get a 10% discount on *manjuu*♪”

So that’s what she’s after?

Before I can think anymore, Nozomi’s face turns serious, and she says, “Now, while it’s not like me to stick my nostrils in other people’s business, I did warn them against the idea, but...”

Does she mean “stick her nose”?

I don’t correct her out loud.

“But what?”

“But those girls didn’t show any sign of giving up. I saw them when I went to the Kanda Myoujin shrine the other day.”

“They were praying that Otonokizaka Academy wouldn’t shut down?”

“Nope. You know how the shrine is steeper on one side than the other? They were singing as hard as they could while running up and down the stairs there. Even though they



were so exhausted they couldn't keep their heads from tilting back, they kept on singing into the evening like stubborn little children."

For a moment, my heart stops.

But, when I imagine that sight...

Pfft. I can't help but laugh.

Nozomi starts laughing along with me.

"When I saw them like that, I just felt like cheering them on♥ So, I brought them some *amazake*, and asked them a little about why they suddenly decided to start doing this."

Nozomi's face suddenly turns serious again, and looks away from me. She looks far down the street and into the distance, gazing as if she can see through everything.

"Turns out, Honoka decided to become a school idol on a total whim. Unlike you, she had no idea how to make it succeed. She just thought that maybe the reason UTX was so popular was because of A-RISE, so she went to one of their concerts. The sparking performance saw there was far beyond anything a sporty, innocent girl like her could have imagined, and the moment she saw it, she knew that was it!"

Uh huh.

I figured it was something like that.

It makes me feel complicated.

UTX is quite proud of their cutting-edge equipment. When you compare Otonoki's building and its internals against that, I feel that the gap between the two is too far for anyone bridge.

But, in its stead, Otonoki has its history and its tradition. I didn't want to admit that it wasn't because of its academic performance, but rather some passing fad like school idols (and that's more like something produced by the school, rather than a student-run club) that made it more popular than Otonoki. And, amidst all that, I definitely didn't want to hear about deeply-rooted local girls like Honoka being enchanted by them and wishing that they could go to UTX, either.

"And so, Honoka was like, 'Now I have to become a school idol, too!' so she immediately roped her childhood friends Umi Sonoda and Kotori Minami into it, and formed the team! Otonokizaka Academy's school idols! First concert in three weeks! And that takes us to now."

"They're already having their first concert!?! Aren't they going a bit fast? We only just had the opening ceremony." I blurt out.

Nozomi nods. "I thought so too. The speed they're going at might have made me curious."

Their speed? Nozomi smiles back at the confusion on my face.

"When she heard the school was closing, she immediately became a school idol, and then she immediately recruited more members, then she immediately attacked the student council, and next they're going to have a concert with an original song."

It makes me dizzy just hearing it.

"If she had that much fire in her, she could have just joined the student council." I whisper.

Nozomi chuckles. "I'd agree, but that's not possible."

"Why not?"



“Didn’t I tell you? She’s kind of dumb, but that Honoka has absolutely zero forethought. All of this is because of an idea she came up with on the spot. While they call themselves a school idol group now, all they’ve done so far is run laps on a staircase. They don’t even have any idea how they’re going to come up with an original song. That’s something they’re still thinking about at the moment.”

Nozomi giggles. “And then, when I saw them like that, I got interested. Even though it was all just barely holding together, when I saw how Honoka thought she had to do something for her school, how she had this unwavering faith that she could do something for her school, I felt that I had to help them out. And, at the same time, I felt ashamed.”

Ashamed?

I think I can understand why.

“She was the last one to hear that the school was closing down, and now she’s trying her hardest to save our school. On the other hand, I knew about it this entire time, and I never thought about it. I’d already given up long ago, and decided to go with the flow. It made me wonder what I was doing.”

Nozomi won’t make eye contact with me.

“The fact that this entire city was a power spot lured me back here, and that’s why I came to this school. I know that Otonoki’s given me so much. For instance, for the first time in over a dozen years of my life, I’ve finally found a friend that I can open myself up to.”

The corners of my eyes start heating up, and now I can’t look at Nozomi’s face anymore, either. “I’ve been running away, telling myself that as long as I could have three years of happiness, it didn’t matter what came after, but now, a small part of me wonders if it’s really okay for me to do that. Hehe. It’s not like me to act like such a good girl, but I think the reason I turned out this way has something to do with the atmosphere of this school. That might be why I felt the need to lend them a little helping hand. Now, I’ve obviously got loads of other work to do, and I can’t leave you alone, either, so you know I’ll be spending most of my effort on the student council-“

“Of course you are! We’re in the student council for Otonoki’s sake. Rather than any school idols, the student council’s a far more direct way to give Otonoki the ending it deserves...”

Did she notice my voice quavering at the end?

I start to grow nervous, and then...

“Elichi...” Nozomi opens her mouth, “One more thing. Those girls are giving off an incredible lucky aura. I’ve got the feeling good things will happen if I befriend them♪ So, with those ulterior motives, I’m going to help them a little bit more. As a matter of fact, when I did a fortune telling for them, their result was great success, although you could also interpret it as great failure.”

Nozomi opens her bag and starts to reach for her cards. With a wry smile, I stop her and motion for her to keep walking.

“Oh, right! We were going to distribute these pamphlets at the nearby school☆”

♥♥♥♥♥♥♥♥

A while after that conversation, school's out, and I leave a bit sooner than usual to go to the Kanda Myoujin.

Today, Nozomi's working as a shrine maiden there.

Maybe we can work out some arrangements for tomorrow's conference.

And then...

Right there on the steep side.

I see Honoka, right where Nozomi said she'd be.

Above them, the sun is starting to set from the bright evening sky of spring.

They're gasping and wheezing.

With their shoulders rising and falling with each breath, all of them are frantically running up and down the staircase.

Somewhere along the line, they'd gained some more members.

It's not just three anymore.

They're singing a song I don't really understand, and just like Nozomi said, it's more like they're desperately shouting at the sky than singing.

Each of them with their heads tilting back.

Gasping and wheezing.

Frantically.

With so much passion, it feels as if it could fill the entire sky.

Afterwards, they began to practice dancing at the shrine.

And for that, they were tripping and bumping into each other, too. It was a real mess.

But, even so, I could feel they were putting their full effort into it.

While I'm hiding and watching them, I start to wish I could come out and coach them. What a bother.

Hehe.

I'm a better dancer than I look.

If I joined them, then they'd be unstoppable... Oh no, what am I saying!?

I hide my face behind my school bag and head home.

♥♥♥♥♥♥♥♥

After I got home, I took a shower and thought for a little bit.

Is this really what I want?

The hot water runs down my head.

Yes, it is.

Nozomi said it too.

I could never run mindlessly, dance mindlessly, and sing/shout so desperately, like they do.

That's why I'm going to walk down my own path.

And save our school.

I still can't see a future where our school continues to exist.



But, someone does.

That wonderful, envy-inspiring future that my cute little underclassmen are running towards, paying no heed to what anyone else thinks of them.

If I don't protect them, then who will?

No matter what it is, I always secure some shot at victory before diving in.

I'm the student council president, the cute and clever Elichka♥

Who else but me could do it?

I change into my bathrobe, and dry my hair as I go back to my room.

I notice the notification light on my cellphone blinking red.

It turns out to be an accidental text from an address I happen to recognize



To Honoka

Nice job at practice today♥

I made my case to Elichka, and it turns out that it worked so well, she even came to watch you practice today♪

She's a shyer girl than she appears, so all she did was just watch and go home. Next time you see her, go and invite her to join. Be a little bit forceful if you have to♥

Once Elichi joins μ's, it'll be like giving an oni an iron club, or like giving a mended lid to a cracked pot♪

According to my fortune telling, the day Elichi finally comes around might not be too far off☆

Hey, she's gotta be doing this on purpose, right?

This girl...

Comments♥Nozomi

Sheesh, Elichi's so stubborn, she won't notice a thing unless I set the table for her like so. She's such a handful♥ I know Elichi real well, so I know the best way to bait her isn't with idols or a 10% discount on manjuu, it's with cute underclassmen that she wants to protect♥ And the plan went off without a hitch! Maybe Honoka will reward me with 20% off manjuu at the Homura for this♪



03 - The Encirclement of Elichka



“Ooh, there’s Eli! Hey, Eli! When are you coming to practice? Come by soon! We’re waiting for you☆”

I’d left the main school building, and was heading for the auditorium.

As I pass by the edge of the field, I notice the first-year Rin, apparently in the middle of gym class, dressed in her track suit and carrying a soccer ball under her arm. She turns and starts waving at me.

“Hey! Hey! Heeeeeey! Eliiiii! Huh? Do you hear me? Over here! Right here! Heeeeeey!”

I was trying to ignore her and walk away, but I started to blush. I failed.

I face Rin, and put my pointer finger to my lips with exaggerated motions.

“Quiet! Aren’t you in class? Keep the chatter down! Keep that up and the teacher’s gonna catch you,” I say.

Panicked, Rin turns her neck side to side, looking around her. “Oh crap,” she says. “And I already got in trouble for sneaking away from gym class to go buy meat buns just the other day!”

Her first-year classmate Maki Nishikino, sitting under a nearby tree, responds, “Oh, don’t worry. Eli’s just trying to scare you. I’ve been keeping watch the whole time. The teacher’s doing demonstrations at the volleyball court the entire time. She used to be in the volleyball club, so

she can't resist the urge to coach them. I already did all of my research. Soccer is relatively unpopular, so that's why I chose it."

Maki is looking aloof and indifferent.

And beside her, Rin's childhood friend Hanayo Koizumi lets out a soft laugh. "Really? I'd expect nothing less, Maki. You even looked it up? So that's why soccer is... well, you know."

Troubled, Hanayo looks over the field.

Now that she mentions it, while they're supposed to be having a soccer lesson right now, nobody's actually playing. There's two girls chatting by the goal, as well as...

"Not like we can play soccer with just five people, right? It's their fault for trying to make the only first-year class try to play soccer during gym," Maki coldly remarks.

True enough. I nod deeply, but I can't help laughing.

She's one to talk when she herself chose to play soccer. Hehe.

Still...

"Guess there's gonna be problems with gym class when we have so few students and the school's about to close..." I sigh.

Rin immediately reacts, "O-Oh, that's it! That's the reason, right?☆ You joined μ's to give that glimmer of hope to the future of our depopulated school, right? So, when are you gonna come to practice? Today? Tomorrow? Or do you want to dance right now? Oh, I can't wait! AS you can see, we've got nothing else to do right now!"

When she starts to dance, I rush to stop her. "Hold it! Don't you have class right now! You know this is no time to dance..." As I talk, my face turns red in embarrassment. "And I'm not sure how you got the wrong idea, but I never said I was joining μ's! Who did you hear that from!?"

"Huh, really!? But Kayochin told me so yesterday..."

I try to hide my embarrassment and flick my eyes towards Hanayo.

"Oh, uh... S-Sorry, I just heard it from Maki, and it made me so happy that I just..."

Hanayo's eyes grow watery as she apologizes repeatedly.

Feeling a bit guilty, I then turn my eyes to Maki.

She's looking off to the side.

Relieved that I can escape from the teary-eyed

Hanayo, I question Maki, "So, what exactly is going on

here? I've told you people again and again, I'm the student council president, so I simply can't take part in any μ's activities-

Maki cuts me off, "That's what you say, but you actually are interested. You've become the student council president because you love our school, so there's no way you wouldn't sympathize with μ's. And, 'even though she acts stubborn, no matter how much she says she doesn't want to join, it's actually the exact opposite!'... Or so I heard."

That's all I need to hear of Maki's low-effort impressions.



I've gone way past just blushing a little bit red. I feel like magma is about to come spewing out of me.

"Dang it, Nozomi!"

Noticing my reaction, Maki turns to face me.

"But really, are you sure you don't want to do it? Now, I've said this before, but it's not just because Nozomi's putting me put to it. I think it's only a matter of time until you join μ 's, too. In my opinion, your looks would give us a strategic advantage. And, right now, I'm the only one in μ 's who can keep a cool head, so we're definitely short on hands here. It would have been real reassuring if you joined us..."

I can tell from that look that she's serious.

Huh...?

As if she's noticed my guard is down, Hanayo looks at me with her still-teary eyes and says, "I agree! Ever since elementary school, you've always been the leader. You were the conductor for the drum-and-fife band, you were always at the front when we were carrying the palanquin, and now you're the student council president! You deserve to be a school idol far more than I do!"

Didn't I just say that I can't join precisely because I'm the student council president!?

Not like she's gonna listen if I say it again. Gah, stop it! Don't look at me like an abandoned puppy!

"Yeah, that's right! So, let's dance together!" Rin says, but I shake her off and make my escape.

Ugh, seriously.

I was so flustered, I forgot where I was supposed to go!

I guess I'll go back to the student council room now.

♥♥♥♥♥♥♥

As I walked down the hall leading back to the student council room, I couldn't help but feel a bit angry.

Seriously, what's going on?

Lately, it's been like μ 's have been encircling me.

For some reason, people talk to me like I'm joining μ 's.

Earlier, when I was buying bread at noon, I ran into Kotori and Umi.

Umi smiled and gave me her condolences for finally getting dragged into this, and Kotori started talking about getting my measurements so she could start making my costumes...

And, as usual, whenever I go to the Homura to buy my granny's favorite manjuu, Honoka always tries to convince me to join. I even get the occasional update on their activities, as if I'd already become a member.

"We can use the gym tomorrow, so make sure you all show up on time! From, Honoka (> ▽ <)♥"

What does that have to do with me!?

What is this?

The sensation is like watching the moat around my castle being filled with dirt.



I know what it is.
The culprit has to be...

As I reached my destination, I threw the door to the student council room open, trying to make as much noise as I could.

And inside, I saw...

"Huh? Is something wrong, Elichi? I thought you were going to the auditorium to arrange a meeting with the drama club. You came back sooner than I thought♥" Nozomi grinned as she ate a manjuu.

Did Honoka bribe her!?

I snapped. "That's enough already! It was you, wasn't it!? Did you tell everyone that I was joining μ's!? Well, thanks a lot. I just saw those three first-years, and they bugged me to come to practice. Whenever I see any of the group at school, it's either when am I coming to practice, or when am I joining μ's, or when-"

"Or when are you going to give in? When is our dependable Elichi finally going to help the unreliable members of μ's for real? Isn't that right?" Nozomi said, smiling.

Help them out for real...

I tried to respond, but I couldn't. I didn't have the words.

My shoulders slumped.

My voice became quiet.

"There's nothing that someone like me could do to help them," I whispered. My heart was pounding.

I noticed something for the first time since Nozomi mentioned it.

From the day I heard about μ's, up until today...

At first, they were just jokingly trying to recruit me, but now, today, they're serious about it.

Every time they come to me, like a conditioned reflex, I tell them I'll never join, it's inconceivable, μ's can't stop the school from closing, and besides, I'm the student council president. All those times I said that, was it because I was shutting my eyes from this?

I said it again.

"There's nothing that someone like me could do to help μ's."

It's very important, so I said it twice.

No, it's just the truth.

I chose to become the student council president so I could give Otonoki the ending it deserved. She's lived here, she was born here, her family runs a store here. Honoka and I have lived the exact same lives, but she and I made the opposite decision.

When I saw what Honoka was doing, I realized something for the first time.

When I heard Otonoki was shutting down... Actually, long before that...

From the moment I heard the rumors, I'd already given up.

The birth rate has declined, so there's nothing we can do. The school is old and under-equipped, so there's nothing we can do. They've been talking about shutting down the school since forever. That popular school is nearby, so there's nothing we can do.

I made up reasons to satisfy myself.

And I gave up.
But, at the very least, I want to let my school go out with a bang.
I know I can do that. I mistook that shallow superficiality for school spirit, and used it to satisfy myself.
In reality, I was just taking the easy way out.
But, Honoka was different.
I have no reason to love this city any less than Honoka.
But, one of us chose to give up and devote herself to letting the school go out with a bang, while the other chose to protect her school, no matter what derision, embarrassment, or pains that would bring.
When I saw that, I felt defeated, for some reason.
Honoka sees something that I can't.
That made me a little jealous.
And, I respected her for doing something I could never do. That's why I decided to support μ's from the distance, in my own way. I thought that was the only thing I was capable of doing. After all, how could someone like me ever join μ's?
I felt like crying a little bit.
Panicking, I bit my lip and turned around.
No, I don't want Nozomi to see this.

Behind me, Nozomi softly said again, "They're simple girls. They just love you. They just want you to join. There are things you can do. There are things only you can do. That's why they want you to help μ's from within."

My chest was shaking.

There was nothing I could say. What do I do?

There's something about to spill out of me, and it's taking everything I could to hold it back.

"Hey, Elichi, this reminds me of that time."

"What time?" With my voice trembling, that's all I manage to say.

"When they asked you to become the student council president. You kept refusing, and refusing, and refusing, but in the end, you couldn't stick to it. You accepted the job, right?"

Pfft. I couldn't help but laugh.

She's right. It is similar.

Even I agree.

My one weakness, this game of chicken.

In the end, I always charge in and self destruct.

I cried.

At the same time, I smiled.

And I said these words...

"And that means you're going to come with me, just like back then, right?"

"Of course. I've already made my peace with that." I hear Nozomi nonchalantly reply with a giggle.



Comments♥Rin

I couldn't have said it any better than Nozomi already did! I love Eli too☆
That's why I'd always go, "Hey, Eli! When are you gonna come practice with μ's?" whenever I saw her at school, and get her angry at me♥
Ehehe☆ With Eli and Nozomi, μ's finally has 9 members, so while we still can't play soccer, we do have enough for baseball♪ We could all be regulars on the team and try to make it to Koshien! That might work too☆



04 - Красный сарафан (The Red Sarafan)



There's a shop halfway up a hill.
I know the way there very well. I always have.
It has a wooden door, and a little window next to it.
Although the storefront is small, it has a large sign on the roof.
And that sign contains writing in unusual lettering:



"I'm back!" I say as I open the door, causing the doorbell to chime as I do so. The staff in the kitchen behind the counter welcome me in.

This is the town's old authentic Russian bakery, The Red Sarafan.

I proceed past the chairs lined up at the counter, where there's a little door in the wall at the very back of the room. It's rounded at the top, like a dwarven door, and a tiny icon of the Virgin Mariya hangs over it.

As I open that door, I expect a soft voice to welcome me back.

"Huh? Nobody's here here today?"

I turn around and, looking back through the door, I ask Irina, who's getting the floor ready for business. She tells me the person I'm expecting is in a meeting with the neighborhood association, and will be back soon.

"Oh, so that's all it was!"

I enter the room alone, and plop myself down on the simple sofa set inside. The rocking chair covered in olive green velvet is the command station of the shop's owner, my granny. Granny's always sitting there, so I've never had the chance to set there myself.

Might as well do so while the master's out♥

The velvet's worn thin in several places.

The sunny, dusty scent of old furniture makes me think of Granny's bright silver hair.

Then...

On top of the cabinet right in front of me, there's something I don't remember seeing. There's a red outfit, and something small and glittering.

"A ring?"

I stand up and walk over to get a closer look.

"It's Otonoki's school ring."

It's a large, dull gray school ring, made of slightly cloudy silver.

Due to its age, there are scratches here and there.

"Is this Mama's?"

As I reach out to take the ring, I disturb the clothing underneath it. It's a rubashka made of white tulle with large strips of lace around the shoulders, and a luxurious red and black sarafan with gold embroidery.

I can't stop myself from shouting, "Ooh, I remember this!"

It's a traditional Russian outfit.

The red sarafan is bridal wear.

Mama once showed it to me.

It was when I was very little. Before I'd started elementary school, when I still lived in Russia.

♥♥♥♥♥♥♥♥

My granny's home in Russia is far to the west, on the European side, near St. Petersburg. But, despite being that close, the village itself was quite rural. It was surrounded by mountains, forests, rivers, and all of nature's treasures. Although it couldn't possibly compare to Siberia, the winters there were really cold, and to be honest, it felt more like I was in Scandinavia, in the land of the Moomins.

Since it was at a high altitude, the sun would stay up well into the late hours of the day during summer, but in exchange, we would have long, long nights of snow-covered silence in the wintertime.

On those nights, we would keep ourselves warm with the old pechka in granny's house.

Mama would boil water to make sugary milk tea for us.

And if we had honeyed fried bread and pancakes with cottage cheese to go with it, that was just the best!

After feeling grumpy and bored from being cooped up in the house all day, my little sister and I would happily take our seats at the dining table.

We'd pick the warmest spot, right next to the pechka.

With the direct heat of the pechka warming our cheeks, sweet black tea warming our tummies, and a large helping of soft, fluffy sweets, we were in heaven.

The two of us would have wide smiles on both of our faces.

And then Mama would laugh and poke our cheeks, I think.

At those times, Mama would always knit and tell us stories as she watched us stuff our cheeks with food.

Stories from a distant land, where Mama was born. Stories from Japan.

We were born in Japan too, but we moved here for Papa's work when we were babies, so we hardly remembered a thing about it.

I remember me and my sister being enthralled, as if we were hearing about a foreign nation.

[Momotaro](#), the [Battle of the Monkey and the Crab](#), [Taro Urashima](#), and the [Crackling Mountain](#).

Having grown up running about in the Russian countryside, I loved all these stories, and none of it felt too unusual to me.

And, sometimes, Mama would tell us a different story.

A story about Mama's childhood.

About the city where Mama was born. Tokyo, Kanda, Akihabara.

It was a place filled with buildings, much like the city of St. Petersburg, where we would occasionally visit. It was filled with people, all the streets were covered in asphalt, and the streets would never go dark, even at night.

That was where Mama grew up, where Granny's shop was, and where Papa's company was, and where Elichka and my sister would one day return. I listened to all of her stories with wonderment.

Someday, I would say good bye to the mountains, forests, and rivers, the old ladies with their heads wrapped up like matryoshka dolls, the flowers in the back yard, the church on the outskirts of the village, and the stray dogs I'd started to befriend, and I would go to that place. I was excited, but also a little scared.

So, Mama smiled and told me about her days as a student in that city.

About a high school just for girls, and the beautiful cherry blossom tree it had.

About how much she enjoyed being in the choir club.

About the lifelong friends she made there.

About how she never studied that hard, but she did enjoy napping in class.

About buying manjuu from the nearby confectionery.

Those white sweets filled with red bean paste, which I had no memory of eating, were Granny's favorite.

Mama would laugh and pat my head, telling me that once I went to Tokyo, Granny would send me out to buy them for her, too.

The pechka would illuminate and warm my hair.

Mama told me that I'd enjoy going to that school too.



On the hand Mama was using to pat my head, there was a thickish ring, giving off a dull reflection of the fire's warm light.

"If I go to that school, will you give me your ring, Mama?" I asked.

My sister, who had been getting sleepy, suddenly shouted, "Me too, me too!" and started to fight with me.

"You two can take turns when the time comes, okay?" Mama said in her gentle voice, removing her school ring and putting it away in a drawer.

All that remained in my chest was a bit of excitement and nervousness.

Would I really go there, too?

Tokyo, Kanda, Akihabara.

In a distant land, at the eastern edge of the world.

♥♥♥♥♥♥♥♥

"Oh, you're here?"

I hear a voice behind me. Mama! No, I was wrong.

It's Granny. I can clearly see the resemblance to Mama's face in her smile.

I jump onto her and give her a hug.

We squeeze each other as hard as we can, as if trying to crush the other. That's the Russian way♥

Then, we put our cheeks together and kiss!

I feel Granny's gentle warmth.

Granny's back has started to become a little crooked. She lowers herself onto the easy chair I'd just been sitting in.

"Hm? It's already warm. Elichka, did you heat it up for me with your little butt?"

I laugh. Granny's the only one who calls my butt "little" nowadays. The impact this gaijin figure makes at school is the pride of the quarter-Russian Elichka.

"You're making piroshky today, right? I'm here to help."

Granny looks pleased.

Granny is the owner of this shop, and when she started it 30 years ago, she made all of its products on her own, but now she's nearly retired. Still, Granny's handmade piroshky that she sells once a week are the secret treasures of the shop.

Lately, Granny's gotten into the habit of saying, "I want someone in the family to carry on this taste even after I die, so you'd better learn, Elichka!"

And every time, I laugh and brush her off, replying, "You can't die yet. Not until you see me get married."

For a moment, my eyes turn back to the red sarafan on top of the cabinet with the school ring.

The red sarafan is traditional Russian bridal wear.

Mama must have sent it from her place in Russia.



I still don't have a partner, and I'm not looking to get married just yet, so she must have just felt like it.

I think she wanted to mark a divide.

And that's because soon, I'll be coming to a divide in my life.

The next time spring comes around, I'll graduate.

I'll be 18 years old, just like Mama was when she got married.

Granny says, "You're getting to that age too, huh? But, if you ask me, a girl isn't ready to get married if she doesn't even know how to make a piroshky!" Laughing, she holds the sarafan up to me as she adds, "No girl would get married so young nowadays. Look at my girl, jumping the gun again!"

"It does look fetching on you, though! The Russian blood runs true in you, Elichka, my cute, clever Elichka. Oh, how about you try it on for a little bit? We'll have to tailor it if it doesn't fit, after all."

At Granny's prompting, I change in the back of the room, quietly slipping the school ring onto my finger as I do so.

The school ring weighs upon my gold fingers.

Mama must have remembered our promise and sent it over.

I think back.

Tokyo, Kanda, Akihabara.

Back to the time when these names were just meaningless strings of katakana to me.

Just like Mama said, I've found a lot to enjoy in this city.

And then, after I wear this school ring to graduation, I'll have to take turns.

For a moment, I have to suppress something inside me.

Take turns.

For the sake of the people coming after me. After us.

We'll have to work even harder.

I hope that Otonoki can bring happiness to even more people, like it did to me.

And that μ 's can do something, no matter how small, to make that happen.

So did I pray with the school ring against my chest on that spring night.



Comments♥Hanayo

Eli and her sister looked so cute back when they were in Russia♥ She looks like she grew up in a fairy tale village! When I think of it that way, it feels strange that Eli's now in μ 's with us. Normally, I could never stand together with someone as amazing as Eli, but I'll have to work even harder so I'm not ashamed to have the same school ring as her!



05 - Our Secret



There she is!

It was just the beginning of Summer, shortly after I'd decided to join μ 's.
In the third-year hallway, leading to the student council room.
Standing right in the middle of the hallway is Umi.
In her hand is a light-blue envelope.
And just past Umi, there's...
The thundering footsteps of someone running full throttle down the hallway. That would be...
"One of the first-years, maybe?"

I thought I'd whispered it, but... it seems she's heard me.

"Eli..."

With a gasp, Umi turns to face me, her face uneasy and red with embarrassment, along with a hint of anger... a rather complicated expression.

"Were you watching in secret the entire time?"

At times like these, Umi can be a bit intimidating.

"I... I wasn't trying to spy on you or anything, see? I was just walking to the student council room, and just happened to..." I say nervously.

"You just happened to pass by?" Umi mutters, her shoulders dropping.

"That's right, I just happened to see you. Total coincidence♥" I laugh, and Umi giggles along with me.

"So you saw everything, did you...?" she says, helplessly shaking her head before facing me again.

But, before I can answer, she adds, "Please, keep this a secret from the others. If Honoka or Kotori find out, they'll raise a fuss..."

But, she seems ever-so-slightly...

Uneasy.

How adorable♪

Giggling, I nod my head in agreement, and Umi returns me a doubting frown.

Oh, please!

Am I really that untrustworthy?

Even though I'm the bona-fide school council president?

Hehe♥

♥♥♥♥♥♥♥

As I walk down the stairs along with Umi as she heads to the club room, Her silent, sidelong glances at me become too much to bear, so I ask, "Hey, so, I've heard the rumors, but you really are as popular as they say, aren't you? So how many love letters does that make since you started your second year?"

Umi blushes and hangs her head.

"It's not a l... love letter... and I haven't been counting!"

She really is just so cute♥

Watching someone as direct and uptight as Umi respond is so fun, I get the urge to push further.

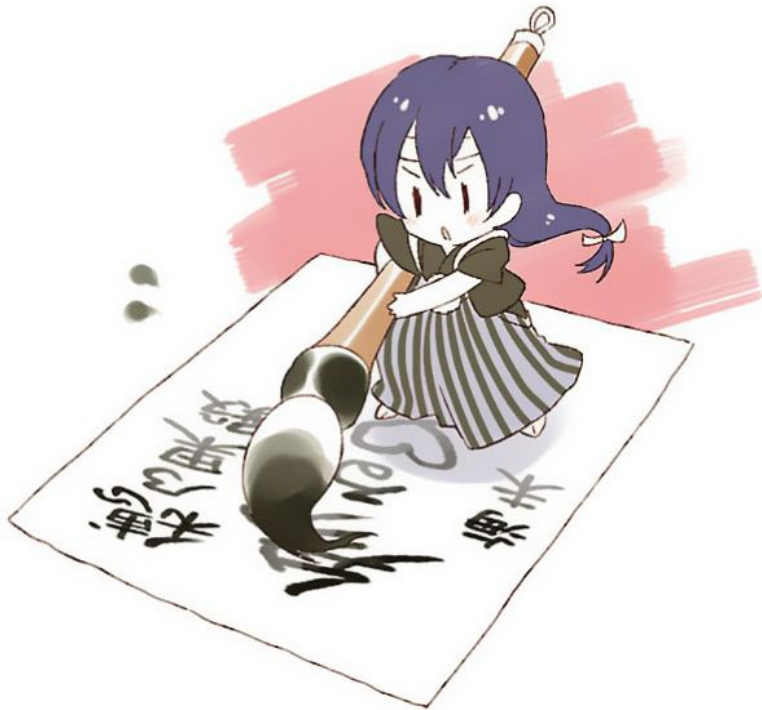
"Really? I mean, she's definitely written something like, 'Please write back! I'll be waiting for your response♥', right? How do you respond to them?"

With difficulty, Umi stammers, "I... I don't respond."

"Huuuh!? You don't!?" I inadvertently blurt out.

Who'd expect someone as proper as Umi not to write back!?

I'd kinda been hoping she'd respond with a scroll of elegant brush calligraphy...



Aw, so that was just my imagination gone wild...

Uncharacteristically scratching her head gently, Umi says, "I really don't know how to handle these. At first, I didn't even imagine that letter saying 'please be my older sister' was a l... love letter, so, thinking she simply wanted to build relationships with their upperclassmen, I wrote back, 'With pleasure, if someone like me will suffice', and then..."

As Umi's face flushes red...

"Pfft," I fail to hold back my laughter.

"And then it turned into a real mess?"

"Yes..."

As she speaks, those unexpectedly puffy cheeks of hers are just begging me to poke them.

"It did, in fact, turn into quite a mess. She'd make me lunch every day, wait at my doorstep when I went to or from school, and when I wanted to stop by Honoka's shop to buy red bean soup, she would vigorously dissuade me."

Uh huh.

You messed up, Umi.

You just don't know how this works, do you?

"And how did it turn out?"

"There's... nothing more to say about it..." she says hesitantly.

With that, I can't hold back anymore.

I start poking at that cute, puffed-out bit of her cheek right next to her mouth.

"Aw, really? You can't go that far and then keep the juicy bits to yourself! Just spill the beans already! Come on! Come on!"

Poke poke poke♥

"W-what are you doing, Eli-"

Ahaha? I dunno why, but when I'm with Umi, I just get the urge to mess with her. Wait, doesn't that make me kinda like Nico?

With that, I return to my senses and straighten myself out.

Nico's the last girl I want to be compared to.

"Uh, um... ahem! Well, how did it end up?"

But still, I just gotta know♪

Girls can't resist this kinda stuff. I'm dying so badly to find out that I've got little hearts in my eyes ♥

"Er... well, actually, I didn't get just one I-I-love letter..."

Not just one? So she got multiple letters? Then that means...

With her head hung low, Umi says, "Yes. I received several. But, I couldn't imagine they would actually be love letters. So, thinking they were just friendly letters, I replied to all of them as a good upperclassman would, saying, 'It would be my pleasure to have you by my side', and so on. And, hoping to bring more students to the dojo, I invited them to come by..."

"And then?"

"One day, all of those girls came together and demanded to know which one of them I really loved...."

Pfft.

This is too funny!

Ahaha! I start laughing out loud this time.

"Yeah, they would do that!"

Just picturing the scene in my head brings tears to my eyes.

"Yes, I was naive," Umi says dejectedly.

She really is just so cute ♥

"And that's why you decided not to reply to love letters anymore?"

"Yes. Though I feel sorry for doing so, I believe I would just be misunderstood regardless of how I respond."

As we chat, we reach the first floor, where we're greeted by radiant sunshine as we exit the school building.



Summer will soon be upon us, won't it?

Umi squints as well.

As I shield my eyes from the sun with my hand, I take a step past her.

"Well then, I'll be going to the student council room." I turn my head to say.

Worriedly, Umi says, "When will you be coming to μ's?"

"I'll be done quick. Just give me 20 minutes." I wink back.

"Try to be quick, could you please? We can't get in formation without everyone pres-"

Cutting her off, I say, "Yeah, I gotcha! Being the last to join, I know I need the practice. It's just that there's a few things I need to do for the student council..."

Umi bites her lip.

"You think maybe I'm unable to move on from the student council?" I say with a slight smile.

"Not at all..." she reluctantly replies.

Honestly, Umi...

Is she direct, or serious, or just stiff...

"You've got a bit of a one-track mind, so now that you're focused on μ's, everything else goes out the window, but..."

I'm a more of a realist.

"There's also people like me, who just can't do that sort of stuff. I guess I'm just a bit of a two timer♥"

Ah, why?

Why is it that when I look at her face, I just want to bully her?

Maybe I'm just a sadist?

I hope not. It'd be lame to live up to my looks like that.

"We'll be waiting," Umi replies with a dejected look.

I wanna poke her cheek one more time, but... we're running out of time, and that'll just waste more time we could spend practicing.

But with that thought, I get an idea.

I spin around.

"Oh, I know. Umi, I'll tell you a good way to reply to that love letter you got."

"Huh?" Umi says, taken aback.

"It's a secret trick for popular girls to use."

Taking a step forward, I bring my mouth to Umi's ear.

"You listening? Just write this, 'I'm touched by your feelings, but I'm sorry. There's already someone more precious to me than anyone else in the world. That would be my dear childhood friend, my beloved Ho... no... k-'"

"Aaaaah!" Umi screams, her face beet-red.

"What are you saying, Eli!? If I do that, they'll just misunderstand even m-"

"Aw, come on, it's just the truth, isn't it?" I scoff.

"The way you're so direct and straight-laced is one of your strong points. If you write back like that, nobody will even think you're lying. Better yet, they'll switch to the tragic heroine role, thinking, 'There's no way I can beat Honoka!' Though it hurts, I'll have to admit defeat! I hope you and Honoka find joy together!"

I make a show of crying to her.

Glaring at me with upturned eyes, Umi says, "So, is that how you write back?"

Uh?

"Nico has told me how popular you are. You're the student council president, after all. Why, just the other day, one of your underclassmen brought you a love letter during the break period."



Ugh, Nico really needs to learn to keep her mouth shut!

With this sudden reversal, I begin to panic.

"So, that is how you respond, is it not? When your underclassmen bring you love letters, you write back, 'Forgive me, but there is already someone I treasure above any other. That would be my fellow third-year student, Miss Tou-'"

"Waaaaaaah!"

Hey, what are you saying!? That is so not how we are!

I feel the heat spreading to my ears.

Seeing my reaction, Umi begins to giggle, apparently unable to hold herself back any longer.

"See? You're no different from me, aren't you?"

As she begins to cry and howl with laughter...

The sight starts to make me laugh with her too.

"Girls' schools sure are a pain, huh?" I say.

"Yes, they can be quite the pain." Umi replies with a laugh.

"But, are you happy you came here?" I ask, and Umi answers with a smile,

"Of course. I have Honoka, who's been together with me since before we were born, along with the other friends I've met here."

She smiles happily.

That smile of hers...

It's seriously just so cute! Am I a bit of a cheater for thinking that?

With a sudden thought, I say, "You think maybe if you and I became an item, the school would devolve into a sea of lamentations?"

"W-what are you saying-?" Umi panics.

Hmm, yep!

I think Umi looks cuter when she's all flustered♥

With that, I lightly pat her on the head.

"Well then, I'd better get going now, or Nozomi's gonna get mad."

Returning to my frantic pace, I wave as I walk away,

Leaving the speechless Umi behind me.

I head for Nozomi, at the student council room.

Umi heads to the club room, with Honoka likely waiting for her there.

My cute little Umi,

It was great spending a bit of time alone time with you.

Your dear big sister Elichka hopes you stay as pure as you are forever

Hehehe♥

Comments♥Umi

It's unfair how Eli loves teasing others so much, and yet trivial matters can shake her up so much herself. And the way she hugs or pokes people all of a sudden... well, she may be used to it as a quarter-Russian but, with me being as unaccustomed to it as I am, when she does that to me, my heart starts to... Aah, what am I saying!? Eli's displays of friendship may still be a bit too high-level for me...



06 - I Hear the Sound of Bells

I check my watch.

“Still 30 minutes late, huh?”

I’ve arrived too early.

I’m at the shopping mall at the train station, right between the set of stoplights.

Having arrived before the meet-up time, I figure I might as well swing by and check it out. It’s the first time I’ve been here in a while. These days, I’m so busy with μ’s and student council stuff that I took care of most of my needs around Suda or Akibahara. I hardly ever come to Ochanomizu anymore. I spin around to look down the hill, and yep, there it is.

It’s been a long time since I’ve seen this scenery.

Heh. Will the Lord punish me as an unbeliever? Or will the loving holy virgin Mariya graciously accept even the likes of me?

I’m not far from Ochanomizu station. Before my eyes, I see Surugadai, and the Holy Resurrection Cathedral in Tokyo.

As I get closer, I see the distinctive cross shining from on top of the belfry’s green dome roof.

This place is commonly known as Nikolai-dou

I came here quite often when I was younger.

I think when I was still in my first few years of elementary school.

♥♥♥♥♥♥

On that day, I’d come here to the Nikolai-dou with Granny, who had some business to do in the office.

As all they had already finished with the services, the cathedral was empty, and the building had returned to silence by now.

While Granny was in the office, I went out behind the cathedral to bask in the summer sun and wait for her.

Argh, I’m so bored!

I decided to see how far I can make it up the big tree growing in the back (I’m pretty good at climbing trees). Here we go, one step, two steps...

As I headed off...

While I was looking slightly upwards, I caught a glimpse of a little girl in the corner of my eyes.

I saw three little people slipping into the opened door in a single-file line.

A fluttery yellow T-shirt, a pink one-piece dress, and blue culottes.

Like a traffic light.

I giggled. Or do their parents attend the church, too?

Cheering up a little, I went to see what they’re doing.

Normally, the church is just old men and women. There’s not so many little kids.

That’s why I’d become the idol of the church, but still, I felt a bit bored in a space where there were only adults, and my little sister was still in Russia. I’d always wished there were someone else my age.



I had a feeling I'd seen the traffic light trio before, but they were too far away to recognize. As soon as I decided to drop down from the tree and investigate, the trio started scanning their surroundings.

The girl at the front, in the yellow tee, had been tiptoeing before something startled her and made her stop.

What are they doing?

They definitely seemed like they were wary that someone might see them.

It seemed that they weren't members of the church.

Could they be thieves?

I was young, too, so I thought of the walls of icons in the cathedral, the expensive-looking tools, and the shiny golden Holy of Holies, and I immediately thought, these people are up to no good! I considered calling someone over, but those girls were even younger than me, so I really didn't think they'd do anything, and it would be embarrassing if I got an adult and made a huge commotion only to find out they weren't stealing anything, so I slid down from the tree as quietly as I could, and chose to follow them.

The three girls nervously proceeded, cautiously peering at their surroundings.

As I observed them more closely, it seemed the girl in the yellow shirt was quite curious, pressing on at the front of the group despite her obvious fear. The girl in the pink dress clung timidly to her back, although she still walked calmly. Lastly, the girl in the blue culottes lagged behind the rest of the group, following them reluctantly.

A rather odd group of intruders.

I shrugged.

Oh, нет! Actually, don't they seem like one of those little bands of thieves I've read about in the foreign storybooks from the library? They're going to make a lot of trouble, and there's gonna be witches and policemen, and it's all going to turn into a huge mess.

While I was thinking, the three of them slowly nudged open the door to the sanctuary, and, oh, they snuck inside!

I chased after them, coming right up to the door. Then, for a moment...

I hesitated.

As those girls went inside, the door silently closed again. As I looked at the handle, I thought to myself, what should I do, what are they doing inside? Are those girls servants of Satan, sent from hell to steal treasures from God's dwelling? I'm so scared. Still, I have to stop them!

Elichka won't let that happen!



Steeling myself, I opened the door.

I took a small breath.

"What are you doing there?"

The summer sun shone in from behind me, illuminating the sanctuary.

Maybe it was because I tried to make my voice sound as scary as I could, but the three girls, standing in front of the wall of icons that separated the Holy of Holies from the rest of the church, immediately froze still. I knew it.

I knew I should have done something to make my background dark instead.

Good thing I found them.

The three little thieves were petrified, as if the light of Medusa were shining upon them.

"Behind there is the holy of holies, the dwelling of God. Only believers are allowed inside," I said as coldly as I could as I approached them. And then...

"Really!? Wow, so a god's inside there! I knew these Christian churches were special! This place is far cooler and fancier than the cabinets at the temples! I'll bet they even offer delicious pancakes instead of mochi and manjuu! It smells so nice in here!" the girl said, her wild, carefree voice echoing through the cathedral as she sniffed the air.

Who was that!? I wondered. Of course, the person speaking was the girl in the yellow T-shirt, leading the group in front of me.

"H... Honoka!?"

When I looked at her again, I realized she was the older of the two girls from the neighborhood Japanese confectionery. Honoka Kousaka.

After that, I quickly looked over the two others. The one in pink right behind her was probably her classmate, Kotori Minami, I think? And, the one in the blue culottes had to be Umi Sonoda, from the local dojo.

I was so confused, I couldn't help but shout, "What are you all doing here!?"

In response, Kotori bowed her head and apologized for sneaking in without asking, while the red-faced Umi nudged Honoka and told me she'd tried to get Honoka to stop.

"Sorry, sorry, it was all my idea♪ I heard the Christian God was in here, and everyone who comes on Sunday gets to eat free bread. I also heard that you come here too, Eli. I'd always wondered what was inside this strange building, and I also wanted to try some of your magic bread, but everyone told me not to bother you, so I decided to explore it myself! And that's why I'm here♥" Honoka said, looking at her two friends beside her and giggling triumphantly.

Oh jeez, she's got some very mistaken ideas about this place.

It felt like one of those worksheets where you're supposed to find the mistakes. But, this time, there was so much I wanted to say, I didn't even know where to start.

But, I do remember feeling a little bit happy.

Because someone was interested in the church.

Because someone knew that I came here.

And, because even though I'd caught her and tried to interrogate her, Honoka looked so relieved.

Until that day, some part of me had always felt that I was a little bit special for coming here every sunday.

Because I belonged to the Orthodox Church. Much like my blonde hair, it was a special mark that made me stick out from the others.

Back then, there weren't even many adults who knew that much about the Orthodox Church.

Even if people were used to the festivals and the parishioners because there were a lot of Shinto shrines around, there were hardly any Christians, and even few of them were with the Orthodox Church. And, among the children there, when I still attended church, it felt like I alone was kept at a distance.

After all, I never talked to my friends about the church. I had just convinced myself that was how sacred matters were supposed to be. When the church bell rang, my chest hurt a little, and when I heard the deep voices of the choir, I felt a little scared. And, when I took a step inside, I felt a bit solemn and depressed, and it became harder for me to speak.

All of that was a burden that I couldn't share with any of the other kids. But why?

When I saw those three girls in the cathedral, it felt like a vent had been opened in my heart for the first time in my life.

Standing in front of the wall of icons giving off a golden glow in the sunlight, Honoka was laughing with glee, together with Umi and Kotori.

When I thought of how the traffic light trio had suddenly stopped like in a game of Red Light, Green Light, I laughed.

Oh, God, I'm sorry.

I've found something so funny in this sacred and inviolable place.

I felt so light, like a great weight had been lifted off of my back.

I couldn't stop laughing.

They gave me a confused look, then, after a while, my laughter started to infect them too.

Doing my best to stop laughing, I say, "The bread we use in the ceremony is like a thin piece of paper, and it doesn't even taste like anything. Your manjuu are far better than that."

Honoka, also laughing, says, "Huh!? And I was expecting a big fluffy piece of bread with butter on top, like in Heidi!"

This is so blasphemous of me.

I don't think I've ever had a sunday like this in my life.

After that day, I stopped going to church so often.

Why?

I'm still not quite sure.

Maybe that was the day a strict and serious churchgoing Russian girl had discovered that you could spend your sunday "exploring" places with your friends.

Now that I think about it, Honoka's always had those reckless whims, even back then.

And Umi and Kotori were always getting dragged around by Honoka because of that.

Hehehe♥

♥♥♥♥♥♥♥

I prayed inside the church for the first time in a while, and came out.

Now, it's almost time for us to meet.

As I walk up the hill to the station, a blinding light shines into my eyes.

I suddenly remember a vision from the past.

Even though it's just an insignificant, meaningless scene from my childhood, my chest starts tightening.



I'm sure that I've got dormant memories like these, hidden all over the city.
After all, this is the city that raised me.
When I think of that, Honoka's desire to protect Otonoki starts to come over me again.
There's a lot of things she says that I can't agree with.
After all, a lot of the things she says are insane.

Still, she's always doing things that I'd never even imagine. No, that's not right.
It's not that I don't imagine them. Even if I did think imagine them, I'd never actually do them, but Honoka does.

There were times when I saw a strange building somewhere in the city, and wondered what it was like inside, but the door was closed, so I didn't enter.

Those places have nothing to do with me.

Never in my life would I ever break the rules and go inside just to take a look.

There's nothing for me to gain from that.



That's how I'd thought my entire life.
And now, I have to become a school idol!?
I think that Honoka has so much power, I'd even go as far as to call it violent.
So, is it really okay for me to be in the same boat as μ's?
I couldn't hear God replying to my prayer.
But, if the sunlight is so dazzlingly bright, then it must be okay.
Is it because of μ's that I'm thinking this way?
Sheesh, and I'm supposed to be the logical student council president, Elichka.

Oh God, your faithful Anastasiya Elichka would like to make a heartfelt request. Please allow our time in this city continue on forever. Please allow us to keep collecting memories within us, these shining memories we have in this city, these many beautiful memories that make our chests tighten up just to think about. Please, give me the love and the courage so that I can help my dear teammates and one day protect the city that's given me so much happiness. Amen.

Comments♥Maki

Before I converted to Honoka's side, I'd have completely agreed with Eli's choice to avoid anything where "there's nothing for me to gain," but that's all in the past now. Before I knew it, I'd started dancing together with μ's, too. Hehe. Both of us have turned all weird. And, Eli's known those three girls from the time when they snuck into the church. She just have been fated to join μ's and look after them ever since that day♥



07 - The Cherry Blossom Tree in the Courtyard

Rarely enough, there was snowfall in the capital yesterday.

The echoing screams of students running through the snow or throwing it at each other had been flying about the building throughout the morning.

“Looks like they’re having fun...” I whisper as I looked down at the courtyard from the window in the student council room.

I almost think I hear a voice behind me saying, “Why are you acting like an old lady now? If you’re jealous, Elichi, then you should just be honest about it. You could even go down there and ask them to let you join in☆”



My shoulders twitch.

“Oh right, she’s not here today.”

Normally, Nozomi would be helping me with student council work, but she’s not here today.

Maybe she had some business in the morning, maybe she just overslept again, or maybe she’s got some other plans. She’s been strangely busy at the Kanda Myoujin lately.

That girl might not seem like she thinks about anything, but she does think. Sometimes, at least.

Well, it is that time of year, I think as I look down on the snow-covered school.

The cold winter has come, and brought snow with it.

Once this season ends, the warm spring will arrive.

I can see a large cherry blossom tree in the courtyard, right beneath the window.

That old tree’s been here ever since the school was built.

Those branches spreading across the sky are currently weighed down by cool, half-melted ice.

But, once spring comes, it will enter full bloom, capping itself with a drifting cloud of flowers to celebrate the students.



Just once a year, when students are enrolling and graduating from the school, they pass under this pink cloud. For years, people have been saying that it’s on its last legs, but each year, it enters full bloom, and its drifting petals cover the school. It’s almost like an embodiment of Otonokizaka Academy’s history.

There’s a rumor circulating amongst the students.

They say that if the school closes down in three years, that cherry blossom tree will finally breathe its last, too.

No, maybe not.

Some even say that the cherry blossom tree’s already past its expiry date by now, but it’s still hanging in there, keeping the last of its life burning so that it can watch over the school’s last moments.



If that trees, and if schools have souls like people do, then that could be true.
If Otonokizaka Academy disappears, then maybe the school itself would be saddened the most.
After all, no matter what we do, we students only spend three years here. On the other hand,
our school has bid farewell to its students and greeted new ones together with the blooming
flowers every spring.
Our Otonokizaka Academy has watched over countless students, and each one of them has
been irreplaceable.

♥♥♥♥♥♥♥♥

“Wow, I never knew cherry blossom trees had lifespans!” Nico says to me as I’m sighing
in the student council room after school. “Here you go. I went and asked everyone like you told
me to, but nobody accepted!” She handed the list of candidates back to me, leaving me
disappointed.

“Cedars and cypresses can live for a few hundred years, but cherry blossom trees can
have surprisingly short lives, while it does depend on the type.” Umi responds, apologetically
averting her gaze from me as she hands her list with the blank side up.
Even without turning it over, her face already tells me just how well things went for her.

“Unfortunately, none of the second-years accepted.”
Last up is Maki.

“Really, Nico? How come you didn’t know? Cherry blossom trees are the idols of
everyone in Japan, whether they’re young or old, boys or girls. The most popular cherry
blossom, the Somei Yoshino, lives about as long as people do. Ones that are over a hundred
years old like the one here are pretty rare. Oh, and one more thing. Did you know that all the
Somei Yoshinos in Japan are grafted, so they’re basically clones. Every Somei Yoshino in
Japan is a cloned copy of one another, so it’s like an idol army made of of siblings or twins,” she
rambles to Nico without even glancing at the sheet she
thrusts at me.



I can’t argue with that.

“Woah, what the heck!? All the cherry blossoms in Japan
are siblings!? Hm, we’ll be fine, though! We’ve built μ’s
up together, so we won’t lose to the cherry blossom
army!” Nico shouts.

“So, you really didn’t get anyone, huh?” I ask Maki first,
since she seems like the easiest to start with.

“W-Well...” Maki, caught off guard, pauses for a moment
before firing back, “Yeah, even if we’re short on people, I
still think it’s a stretch to start asking the first-years out of
the blue. Besides, due to the matter of the school
closing, there are less than half as many of us as the
second-years. That’s only one class....”

"True," I laugh weakly. Maki's expression softens up a little, and she stops. Beside her, Umi is standing with her face red and her shoulders scrunched together.

"S-Sorry. The second-years have been living in the shadows of the more accomplished third-years this entire time, so maybe that's why a lot of them are so laid-back. I did ask all of them, but they all told me they couldn't possibly become the student council president, and ran away."



"The problem of finding a new student council president, huh?" Nico mutters with a very disinterested look on her face.

Exactly.

It's been over half a year since I joined μ 's, and I've grown used to doing that and being the student council president at the same time. Things have been picking up on the school idol side too, and we're planning to hold our biggest concert yet in February.

Meanwhile, the biggest problem on my mind is this.

The teachers told me that they couldn't find anyone who could be the next student council president just yesterday. So, I made a list of the most promising candidates myself, and had the members of μ 's in each year go around and ask them.

That was all wasted effort, huh? It's times like these that really make me feel just how underpopulated our school is.

While there are still three classes of third-years, there's only two classes of second-years, and one class of first-years. With the student count dropping faster by the year, maybe this was unavoidable.

The season of snow has already come.

If we don't find someone to be the next president soon, then what will become of the student council?

"Yeah, there's a lot of laid-back girls among the second-years. If that's how it is, maybe Eli's just gonna have to be president for another year, right?" Nico says, holding her hands up in the shape of bunny ears for no real reason.

"I could go ask the second-years one more time..." Umi says quietly, completely ignoring Nico's joke.

"Oh get real! How's Eli supposed to be president for another year!? She's already a third year!"

You just can't bring yourself to let those remarks slide, can you, Maki?

"Sorry, thanks for everything, but I'll just set this issue aside for now. Since the teachers asked, I figured I'd do what I could to help, but this looks like it'll be tough to solve."

"That's right. Even in Elichi's case, the teachers had to ask her again and again, until she gave in and took the job," Nozomi finally says, having been sitting at the other table and sipping tea the entire time. "It sure is taking a while, though. Where could my manjuu be?"

And then, right after that...

“Nozomi, you there!? I brought the goods! Homura of Kanda’s specialty snow-viewing manjuu! Let’s all eat them while they’re still fresh!”

A shout rings through the hallways, and at the same time, Nozomi smiles and stands up, putting her hands on my shoulders.

“No need to get so worked up. How about we take a break and eat some manjuu?”

Nozomi pushes me towards the door, which slams open before I can think of anything to say. Standing in the doorway is a snow-covered Honoka. She apparently ran home to grab some manjuu.

When I see Honoka there, smiling broadly and gasping for breath, a spark shoots through my head.

A flash of light in the darkness of my mind.

Huh... I feel like I’m reaching towards an idea that I hadn’t even thought of before.

And then...

“Oh, everyone’s already here♥ So, like, I was having a snowball fight with Nozomi during lunch, and then we started talking about how all the snow piled up from this huge storm looked just like manjuu, and then I remembered like, ooh, maybe grandma’s made her legendary snow-viewing manjuu today, and Nozomi said she totally wanted to try them, and just check them out! These soft, chewy mochi are kinda see-through, like they’re made of [habutae mochi](#)—”

I’m starting to get overcome by Honoka’s enthusiasm.

I take a step back, but...

“W-Wait, Honoka. I just thought of something... A total game-changer... No, no, stay right there, I gotta do something before this idea escapes—”

I rush past Honoka...

Whoosh.

I hardly even realize I’ve slipped.

In one moment, my feet fly into the air.

Smack.

The noise of a hard object hitting linoleum, like something out of a manga, rings through my head.

I don’t realize what’s happened.

I’m not sure whether or not it was really there, but the last thing I think I see is a puddle of water pooled around Honoka’s sopping-wet shoes.

Then, in the next moment...

Everything went dark.

♥♥♥♥♥♥♥

“Nope, there’s nothing we can do now. Let’s just leave her be♪” says Nozomi.

“Waaaaa!?! You mean she’s not gonna regain consciousness!?! Oh my god, I killed Eli!” says Honoka



"It's fine, she's still breathing, so she can't be dead☆ I'm sure she's just sleeping," says Rin.

"Eli's always working so hard. Maybe she didn't get enough sleep today, either," says Hanayo.

"Yeah, she's a total workaholic. Maybe she'd be much better off staying in dreamland for the rest of her life♥" says Nico.

"Don't be ridiculous! Maybe she does have a slight concussion. We might need to take her to the hospital once she wakes up," says Maki.

"Oh, I can accompany her for that. We have had a few concussions at our dojo before," says Umi.

"Oh, I'll go too! If she's hurt, then I'll need to tell, Mom anyway..." says Kotori.

I hear voices as I'm sleeping in the darkness.

Gah, quit running your mouths, you guys!

I wish I could wake up and yell at them, but when I try to open my eyes, it feels like there's weights on my eyelids.

A cold towel?

It feels so nice, I decide to stay right where I am.

The cold, moist darkness is so comfortable.

Maybe I should just pretend I'm still asleep.

The day's left me feeling so tired, anyway.

But then, I hear the clicking of someone pressing a switch.

At that moment, music starts blasting through the room at high volume.

Twitch.

Even though I was trying to enjoy a relaxing sleep, my body reacts.

It's a song that's too familiar to me, one I've heard too many times and love too much. It's one of μ's songs.

Argh, my body's moving on its own...

Someone giggles as my fingers move automatically.

"I knew she was faking it♪," says Nico.

"Huh, were you really, Eli!?"

"Elichi, you're not gonna get away with using your fall as an excuse to skip practice♪"

Nozomi's pushing it so hard, her words sap all my strength away.

I can't hold it in anymore. I start giggling with the wet towel still covering my eyes.

"Oh, she really was just pretending!" everyone shouts.

Honoka hops about.

"Woohoo! Yippee♪ Eli came back to life♥ And this song's got me in a dancing mood now, too!" Come on, guys, let's all get to the club room!"





The room fills with cheers.

♥♥♥♥♥♥♥

In retrospect, I've been like this ever since I joined μ 's.

I'm always being dragged through unthinkable events and unimaginable happenings.

The next thing I know, I'm running in a full sprint.

Honoka's just mindlessly chasing after what's right

in front of her and ignoring all the details, and dragging me with her.

Oh.

No, maybe not?

Honoka's not the only one running.

I'm sure there's Kotori and Umi. There's Maki, and Hanayo, and Rin. And also, there's Nico and Nozomi.

They're all the same.

From time to time, someone else is at the front of the pack. But, with the nine members of μ 's, whenever someone's about to fall or come to a stop, there's always someone running, and dragging everyone with them.

Charging.

Going forward.

Not worrying about the tiny details.

Onwards, and onwards.

And all my usual analyzing, planning, and negativity are all blown aside as μ 's charges forth.

That's what makes me uncomfortable.

When I'm surrounded by the eight other members, can I run the same way they do?

Sometimes, when I'm in events with μ 's, I get impatient.

Sometimes, I can't stand how spontaneous everything is anymore, and I think, we have to plan things out! But then, new developments come in so hard and fast that I'm overwhelmed, and I wonder whether I can really fit in with a group that acts on instinct like μ 's.

Maybe someone who's as logical as me is only slowing us all down? That's a secret little complex I've had.

But, on days like today, that's when I think that I don't have to worry about that complex.

Just blast those little worries and pessimistic thoughts aside, and head onwards. That's how μ 's works.

And, I'm a member of μ 's too.

Maybe I'll just stop thinking.

Does it really matter who the next student council president is?

I'm the president right now.

So, I'll just think about how to do my job as best as I can, until the very end!

And, until the very end, I'll keep on doing everything I can together with the rest of μ's, the group we started together, for the sake of our school's future!
I know that's the only thing I need right now.

I, too, will believe in the miracle that μ's gave me.
That the wonderful school we love so much will continue into the future.

I have a feeling.
This is unusual for someone who's always as logical as myself, but I have a baseless gut feeling.
Even though I don't know whether μ's activities will end in success or failure, I have a feeling that μ's will shine brighter than any other school idols in the world.

We're idols.
It's not about winning or losing, about the ends or the results.
Just this shine.
Though it's something immaterial, we just need to take all these emotions that the nine of us are feeling right now, and show them off to the entire world. Maybe that's all we need to do.
At last, I've come to think that way.
And now, with this new perspective, I think I can see an endless road before me, shining with pure white light.
I'm sure this is the same thing the rest of them have seen this entire time.



μ's has given me so much.
So, I'll shout this prayer out for μ's, too.

May our dreams come true!

May all the people that Otonokizaka Academy and μ's have met continue to love us forever.
May our thoughts stay within you forever, like a sparkling crystal.

Comments♥Honoka

μ's might have been something I started, but I know better than anyone else that if I were alone, I would never have accomplished anything. I had nothing, and everyone lent me their strength, little by little. That's the miracle. And from here on out, I'm definitely gonna keep on heading forward with the one power I do have, a heart that never gives up! All of you, stay with me forever!

